

Current Economic Programs Printed Survey Results: by the *Housing Completions* Statistics Users Respondent Base

U.S. Census Bureau
Current Economic Statistics User Survey

OMB CQM-26 (Rev.5/5/98)

I. DATA CONTENT

Your answers identifying the survey data you use will help us understand our users' patterns of data use.

1. Which Current Economic Statistics from the Census Bureau do you use? (Mark all that apply.)

(1) Monthly

0.0%;	0	None
55.4%;	112	Retail Sales
40.6%;	82	Wholesale Trade
46.0%;	93	Manufacturing/Trade Inventory/Sales
93.1%;	188	Housing Starts
83.2%;	168	Building Permits
85.6%;	173	New Home Sales
72.8%;	147	Value of New Construction Put in Place
100.0%;	202	Housing Completions
57.4%;	116	Expenditures for Residential Improvements
74.3%;	150	New Residential Construction
38.6%;	78	New Mobile Home Placements
42.1%;	85	Monthly Imports and Exports
43.1%;	87	Current Industrial Reports
44.6%;	90	Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, Orders

Replies 202; Forms 202

(2) Quarterly

52.3%;	46	Quarterly Financial Report
78.4%;	69	Current Industrial Reports
9.1%;	8	Federal Assistance Awards Data System
19.3%;	17	Quarterly Tax Survey
11.4%;	10	Quarterly Public Employee Retirement

Replies 88; Forms 202

(3) Annual

47.3%;	86	Annual Retail Trade
41.8%;	76	Annual (Wholesale) Trade
19.2%;	35	Annual Survey of Communications
22.0%;	40	Transportation Annual Survey
23.1%;	42	Service Annual Survey
52.7%;	96	County Business Patterns

28.6%;	52	ZIP Code Business Patterns
35.7%;	65	Statistics of U.S. Businesses
62.1%;	113	Characteristics of New Housing
70.9%;	129	Annual Building Permits
54.9%;	100	New Residential Construction in Selected Metropolitan Areas
29.7%;	54	Annual Capital Expenditures
47.3%;	86	Annual Survey of Manufactures
42.9%;	78	Current Industrial Reports
15.4%;	28	Research and Development Survey
27.5%;	50	Plant Capacity Utilization
9.3%;	17	Education Finance Survey
12.6%;	23	State Tax Collection Survey
7.7%;	14	Annual Public Employee Retirement
12.1%;	22	Annual Survey of Public Employment
12.6%;	23	Consolidated Federal Funds Report
20.3%;	37	State Government Finances
33.5%;	61	Annual Imports and Exports

Replies 182; Forms 202

II. DATA DELIVERY

The Census Bureau is considering use of the Internet as the primary method of data delivery. By completing the following questions, you will help us retain the most essential delivery formats and design the best possible data delivery service.

(4) 2. How do you receive current economic data now? (Mark all that apply.)

87.0%;	174	Printed Publications	16.5%;	33	FAX
75.0%;	150	World Wide Web (Internet)	9.5%;	19	Direct (E-mail) delivery
31.0%;	62	CD-ROMs	1.5%;	3	Regular mail
26.0%;	52	Diskettes	11.5%;	23	Other

Replies 200; Forms 202

- EBB (of Stat-USA) Phone calls
- Economic Bulletin Board
- News Services such as Bridge.
- Electronic "Bulletin Boards"
- Check values by telephone
- also use microfiche in some cases.
- time-share vendor (private)
- Economic Bulletin Board-Commerce Dept.
- hard copy computer run
- Analytics
- DRI DATABASE
- Internet, ProNet
- Individual sources using census bureau data
- sec,Secondary Vendor (R
- Newswires
- Intermediate Data Vendor.3,4,6,
- Fax from Japanese media
- Tape, Cartridge
- Overnight Delivery of NIA data
- CD Rom & Publications in Library
- By phone to construction statistics
- Subscribe to America Statistic Index on Microfiche

- News Recall Services-i.e. Dow Jones Reuters
- STAT-USA+WEFA Group

(5) 3. What format do you PREFER when downloading data for further manipulation? (Mark all that apply.)

70.7%;	133	Spreadsheet (e.g., wkl, xls, etc...)
32.4%;	61	Database (e.g., dbf, mdb, etc...)
27.1%;	51	ASCII delimited
21.8%;	41	ASCII flat files
13.8%;	26	Retrieve from print or screen and enter manually
11.7%;	22	Do not manipulate data
1.6%;	3	Other

Replies 188; Forms 202

- TSO files
- Access database

4. What capabilities do you want on the Census Internet site? (For each line, indicate the degree of your preferences, from 5 [high] to 1 [low].)

(6) a. Direct (E-mail) delivery:

44.6%;	78	5	17.7%;	31	3	9.1%;	16	1
14.9%;	26	4	6.9%;	12	2	6.9%;	12	Don't know

Replies 175; Forms 202

(7) b. E-mail notification:

48.9%;	85	5	16.1%;	28	3	8.6%;	15	1
11.5%;	20	4	9.2%;	16	2	5.7%;	10	Don't know

Replies 174; Forms 202

(8) c. Retrieve/display to screen:

53.5%;	91	5	11.8%;	20	3	5.9%;	10	1
19.4%;	33	4	1.8%;	3	2	7.6%;	13	Don't know

Replies 170; Forms 202

(9) d. Search:

67.6%;	123	5	12.1%;	22	3	1.1%;	2	1
15.4%;	28	4	1.1%;	2	2	2.7%;	5	Don't know

Replies 182; Forms 202

(10) e. Download complete data sets:

70.0%;	126	5	6.7%;	12	3	2.2%;	4	1
15.0%;	27	4	2.8%;	5	2	3.3%;	6	Don't know

Replies 180; Forms 202

(11) f. Download selected data:

76.6%;	141	5	5.4%;	10	3	1.1%;	2	1
12.5%;	23	4	1.6%;	3	2	2.7%;	5	Don't know

Replies 184; Forms 202

(12) g. Software help/tutorials:

19.8%;	33	5	29.9%;	50	3	10.8%;	18	1
16.8%;	28	4	16.2%;	27	2	6.6%;	11	Don't know

Replies 167; Forms 202

(13) h. Publication-quality printing:

30.8%;	53	5	18.0%;	31	3	14.0%;	24	1
16.3%;	28	4	15.7%;	27	2	5.2%;	9	Don't know

Replies 172; Forms 202

(14) i. Charts and graphs:

32.6%;	58	5	18.5%;	33	3	12.9%;	23	1
15.2%;	27	4	16.3%;	29	2	4.5%;	8	Don't know

Replies 178; Forms 202

(15) j. Geographic maps:

28.3%;	49	5	14.5%;	25	3	12.7%;	22	1
23.1%;	40	4	14.5%;	25	2	6.9%;	12	Don't know

Replies 173; Forms 202

(16) k. Other, please specify:

72.7%;	8	electronic bulletin board	27.3%;	3	Other
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Replies 11; Forms 202

- Publications like QFR to be in spreadsheet format or mdb for easy data manipulation after downloading.
 - ACROBAT FILES, which you may include in item h.
 - Update full report at release time
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(17) l. Electronic Bulletin Board (To collect write-ins)

50.0%;	1	5	0.0%;	0	3	0.0%;	0	1
0.0%;	0	4	50.0%;	1	2	0.0%;	0	Don't know

Replies 2; Forms 202

III. DATA USAGE

Your answers describing how you use the data will help us design the most effective Current Economic Statistics retrieval tool.

(18) 5. Do you combine/compare/merge data from more than one source listed in Question 1?

18.9%; 36 No

81.1%; 154 Yes

Replies 190; Forms 202

(19) 6. What time periods do you consider when using these data? (Mark X all that apply.)

64.2%; 124 5+ years

42.5%; 82 trends up to 1 year

61.7%; 119 trends up to 5 years

0.0%; 0 Other

51.3%; 99 latest 1 or 2 periods

Replies 193; Forms 202

(20) 7. How do you use the data? (Mark all that apply.)

49.2%; 95 Create value-added products/services

37.8%; 73 Perform patron/client inquiries

33.2%; 64 Inform marketing decisions

24.9%; 48 Inform investment decisions

23.8%; 46 Republish in newspaper/journal

19.7%; 38 Store reports/printouts for archival purposes

8.3%; 16 Locate new sites

0.5%; 1 Other

Replies 193; Forms 202

- Store data in database.
-

(21) 8. What explanatory information do you consult when using these data? (Mark all that apply.)

71.2%; 136 Definition of terms

60.2%; 115 Sampling and estimation methodology

57.6%; 110 Narrative text describing survey results

41.9%; 80 Survey design

12.0%; 23 None

2.1%; 4 Other

Replies 191; Forms 202

- Explanations of data changes/revisions
 - Direct contact with Census analysts
 - Comparisons to earlier surveys and/or similar data from other agencies--e.g. census to BEA in one estimates.
 - Regression analysis
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(22) 9. Do you have any pressing data or information needs that are not currently being met?

- We are very much interested in unadjusted counterparts of tables 7 & 8 of the FT900 release being made available on internet on the day of release. Publications like QFR also need to be made available in spreadsheet or mdb for us to further manipulate data.
- No. Increasingly more and more data sets are becoming available electronically-which makes our work easier by eliminating manual inputting of data.
- Regional retail sales estimates (cancelled after 1996)
- More local info. (PMSA at least)
- Non-residential building permit data.
- State/MSA non-residential construction data!

- Find it difficult to get info a local area ie. N.E., Urban, but not specific such as New York. Also, like annual building Permits in greater detail to states or county level.
- Retail Trade Monthly - Regional Data Survey - Blue Pages, Building Permits - Non-Resident & Additions.
- I do not receive all the requests all the time.
- If I request "personal incom 1989-1992 monthly", the database would show me what I requested data.
- Apartment (Multi-Family) Statistics.
- Information on nonresidential construction.
- Data on residential construction; alterations, renovations and conversions; and county level mobile home shipments.
- No.
- MCD Business Patterns, Massachusetts is doing away with county government, MCD income estimates.
- Non-residential building permits--number by type of building.
- The availability of Residential and Commercial Building Permit Data.
- Accurate and timely international statistics on the air conditioning, refrigeration and heating industry.
- We use and would like to continue to use retail sales by county data and the merchandise line sales data.
- Int'l trade data on internet are inadequate. Only press releases are there. When data are revised, if data are not in the press release, there is no way to get the revisions (ex: monthly data from exhibits 6&7 of FT900).
- Monthly historical trade data.
- More timely data.
- Data on non-residential construction.
- Any commercial construction activity--new or improvements
- Statistics on new residential construction for MSA's in more locations (e.g. all top MSA's)
- 1) NAICS to harmonized code concordance. 2) Timely plant capacity utilization at greatest detail level possible. 3) Windows version import data/monthly annual easy to use historical with full detail. 4) New Home sales (without land).
- Yes--Commercial building permits--Bring them back now!!!
- YES! Bring back non-residential state/local permits authorized! This was a severe loss for interpreting local economic trends. Also, more geographic detail, more frequently.
- Wish you were more current...
- Some data are not historical enough. Most of the time, I need data as far back as 20-30 years ago.
- State, county & local permit date for nonresidential construction. Use to get this.
- Monthly Retail Sales for U.S. Metropolitan Areas.
- BLS has great site. Well organized. Need to make it easy to find seasonal factors and benchwork.
- Organic Chemicals Annual was very useful before it was discontinued. We would like annual production, consumption figures made available again.
- Pollution abatement expenditures by SIC
- 1). Employment in types of projects, such as residential construction. 2). Construction productivity measures.
- 1). GDP 2). Need to see how prior dat releases of components affect quarterly advance.
- Up to date residential improvements data garage door 1 garage door openers involved in improvements.
- Better categorization of Import/Export information. It is very difficult to determine how much of some of our products were imported or exported.
- Want monthly retail trade by state & MSA back.
- Non-residential Building permits.
- Currency is always an issue, but I am also cognizant of the constraints on your end.
- Housing stats and completions by state, MSA Valve of construction put-in-place by stats, MSA
- Yes, Non-residential permits and regional retail sales.
- Place and regional economic data sets in relation to population/race trends.
- Expenditures for non-residential construction, especially non-residential reconstruction.
- Monthly housing inventory by metro area.
- Make data reports easier to print off of the web.

- Average expenditures per residential improvement project for single family homes by region. Average value for residential permits by region.
- Move capital expenditure data--more frequent, more detailed
- Website is extremely difficult to navigate.
- Non-residential permits!!
- Median income and poverty tables are not in spreadsheet form (they one were).
- Non-residential new construction and renovation
- Rent data and vacancy rates.
- MSA retail sales
- Monthly service sector sales counterpart data st to retail, wholesale, and manufacturing shipments.
- Permits for remodeling and non-residential construction.
- The more history, the better.
- Commercial, Industrial, and other non-residential construction put-in-place!
- Immediate posting of data revisions when significant revisions are undertaken.
- Non-residential construction data outside California! Bring it back!
- Data at the metropolitan area level, e.g. retail sales, commercial building permits (office, industrial, retail).
- We have a need for long historical time series and for long-term forecasts.
- Timely business indicators for MSA's.
- Commercial Building Permits County level on a timely basis.
- Non-residential building permit data collection should be restored by state and metro area!
- Commercial building permits, Commercial real estates sales.
- As a foreign academic library, we are concerned about cost of access.
- Estimates of coverage by county for building permits better state and local data.
- Report on productionn of industrial fabrics

IV. INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION ISSUES

We will soon begin restructuring the Current Economic Surveys based on the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Your answers will help us ensure that these surveys continue to provide the economic information needed by markets, policy makers, and business people. For more information on NAICS, see the Bureau's web site: <http://www.census.gov/NAICS>.

(24) 10. At what levels of detail do you MOST FREQUENTLY USE industry data classified by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)? (Mark all that apply.)

58.9%;	109	4-digit industries (or maximum detail I can get)
40.0%;	74	Sector totals (SIC division); e.g., Manufacturing or Retail Trade
35.1%;	65	2-digit major groups
33.5%;	62	3-digit industry groups
14.6%;	27	NA (don't use SIC-based data)
2.7%;	5	Other

Replies 185; Forms 202

- The greatest level available--CIR level. Product level.
- I don't use this much, but others in the agency do!
- 7-digit
- UP TO 8-DIGIT
- 6-digit product data

(25) 11. Were you aware that the SIC system is being replaced by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)?

31.6%;	60	I was unaware of this
31.1%;	59	I am partially aware, but lack details
37.4%;	71	I am aware and understand some implications

12. Would you like to receive more information about NAICS?

(26) Yes, please send me - (Mark all that apply)

92.0%;	115	A brochure that explains NAICS	29.6%;	37	Conference announcements
60.8%;	76	NAICS implementation plans	4.0%;	5	Other

Replies 125; Forms 202

- Comparison-SIC VS. NAICS Similar to when SIC definitions change.
- Info on how to reconcile two systems.
- Contacted by local information office fo Bureau.
- I already have the CD

(27) No Thanks -

67.1%;	47	I will check the Census Bureau's web site (www.census.gov/naics)
32.9%;	23	I don't need more information about NAICS

Replies 70; Forms 202

V. USER PROFILE

Please tell us about yourself so we may serve you better.

(28) 13. Type of organization.

54.6%;	107	Business	4.6%;	9	Association
16.3%;	32	Government	2.6%;	5	Individual
12.2%;	24	Academic/Research	0.5%;	1	Library
5.1%;	10	Media	4.1%;	8	Other

Replies 196; Forms 202

- Information and consulting firm
- Consulting
- Economic Development
- Building Material Manufacturer
- Consultant
- Library (University)
- University
- Corp. Library

(29) 14. Do you work in your organization's library?

31.4%;	59	Yes	68.6%;	129	No
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Replies 188; Forms 202

(30) 15. What is your affiliation with the Census Bureau?

79.6%;	152	None	1.0%;	2	Census Information Center
6.3%;	12	State Data Center	7.9%;	15	Other
5.2%;	10	Business/Industry Data Center			

- SDC Affiliate
- State Government Agency.
- Cooperator in disseminating permits authorized data
- Government
- Depository
- Affiliate Data Center
- Data use.
- Heavy user
- GPO Depository
- Trade Association
- Client
- Building Permit Depository
- Associate Data Center
- Consumer of housing data
- Federal Depository Library

(35) 20. May we contact you to follow up on this questionnaire?

78.3%; 144 Yes

21.7%; 40 No

Replies 184; Forms 202

(36) Question 21. Remarks:

- It would be nice to have all reports available in spreadsheets format. For any publication reports that contain large tables and data, mdb file format would be an ideal too.
- We greatly appreciate this survey. I'd like to stress one major concern we have: As you move toward complete Internet delivery of data--please continue to publish "hard copies" of the economic reports for us to compare as backup. We have noticed that occasionally there are errors in Electronic Bulletin Board and Internet files--so we rely on the hard copy as backup. We use it as a safeguard. Thank you and feel free to contact me at your convenience.
- A published paper version should always be made available for purchase to the public. Information being available on the internet is nice, yet it is a completely different animal than having a hard copy version of the information. An example: I can receive my new off the internet, but I still prefer to get my newspaper in the morning for reading at my leisure away from a computer.
- When is 1997 Census to be available? Please keep as much of the data in print as possible-- Thanks!
- Census bureau data is always helpful--the data you provide enhances our publication and enables readers to make informal business decisions.
- --But please ask for Deborah Foster.

Thank you.

- Thank you for your great service!
- I prefer e-mail contacts rather than phone, as I am frequently not available at my phone for extended periods.
- We serve a varied clientele (academic, business, government, and private citizens) and work across many subject. Census data are absolutely vital to us. Our biggest need is for more geographic area detail more frequently (state, county, place, if possible). Users often do not understand the 5 yr. gaps and lag time for the major Economic Surveys that offer such detail, much less the 10 yr. decennial cycle. The internet is a great help in speeding "publication", but we find access is not yet universal. We still download and print entire documents for guide reference and historical purposes. I am concerned about just how long the electronic medi will remain accurate and usable as technology changes. How will the Bureau deal with these problems?
- Good job on the web site.

- Respondent provided voluminous, illegible comments throughout that could not be deciphered to record.
- Sorry for the delay--the survey didn't arrive until 8/12/98.
- Would be very interested in some information available on the Internet.
- PDF files are big and we have to retype the data for analysis. Having raw or spreadsheet/database data would save us much time. BLS's web site is a good one to study.
- I think that this user survey is an excellent idea; you should poll users periodically.

I would be happy to participate in a users' panel or advisory group.

- Desperately need this information from NAICs. Emerging technology/company information requested everyday.
- We look forward to working with you on the upcoming Census.
- Be sure that all information is made available in the most "user-friendly" manner possible!!
- I always use your data for the economic releases. My major concerns are: timeliness of data availability on web and being able to print the data from the web without having to reformat printing fonts. I also to the revisions when they come out, but often the location and structure of the revisions is confusing.
- Current setup on the web is extremely frustratingly for someone trying to print/download data and reports

-> Make .XLS files available with lots of historical data.

__ Use .PDF filrds for pasting your releases -Having to flow ascii into a word processor and reformat is not the way to go. Email sub would be helpful

- I find the Census Website to be fairly difficult to use. It's hard to find information that I need. For example: I was trying to find tables on the number of Households & spent probably 45 minutes locating it.
- I work as a local government long range planner. My duties include socio-economic analysis as requested by the public, politicians and officials. The Census Bureau's Web Site is one of my key resources.
- We love the Census Bureau! Clear publications indices and ease of search engines on the Internet site are very important to us. Also, choice of how to download data is good, not all users need or can use spreadsheet software.
- More documentation and instructions for obtaining data from gohper directories would be helpful.
- Keep up the good work.
- Please provide me with the description of the monthly and annual products listed on the front page.
- If feasible, include columns heading names (labels) in spread sheets, as well as row labels. Not now done in monthly building permits diskettes and STF3-A CD-ROM, for example.
- Good to see this survey! Dealing with you via the Internet and mail is going well. However, trying to reach people ove rthe phone is still a major headache.

Figure 1: